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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RABINDRANATH TAGORE:
EDUCATOR AND SOCIAL REFORMER

by

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SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled RABINDRANATH TAGORE: EDUCATOR AND SOCIAL REFORMER submitted by Bishnupriya Patnaik in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Philosophy of Education.

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ABSTRACT

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), although better known for his literary and poetic creations, winning the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913, was also an educationist and a social reformer of great significance at least in the educational history of India. His early frustrating experience in his schools, his grounding in the traditional Indian literature by his father's training and his lasting affair with the West starting from his adolescent days all made him a practical educator besides a naturalist. Tagore's educational ideas evolved from his concept of indigenous system of education in the medium of mother tongue to a full-grown philosophy of education encompassing broad goals of internationalism and accommodating at the same time the immediate needs of the contemporary Indian society. Tagore's system of natural education was modeled after the ancient Indian system of Tapovans, with a greater emphasis on education for the full development of the individual in close communication with and feeling for nature. His Visva-Bharati, founded in 1918, was an international university with a primary emphasis on personal growth through aesthetic education in dance, music and the fine arts. Unlike Rousseau, however, Tagore did not disown society in his concept of natural education. In fact, through his rural reconstruction program in Sriniketan, he realized his idea of education as an instrument of social change. Tagore's Siksa Satra was a combination of craft education with higher goals of learning; some of these ideas were later popularized in India by Gandhi.

Tagore's educational thinking suffered from some inconsistencies

in the underlying values. He failed to fully reconcile his early nationalistic feelings with his vision of international education, his idealistic concept of natural education with his immediate utilitarian goals of social welfare and, above all, his idea of education for social change with his disavowal of scientific and industrialized social system. In spite of all these, Tagore, unlike many other educational philosophers, excelled in putting into practice what he preached. His greatness remained in not only providing an ideal answer to contemporary educational problems, but also in demonstrating their practical use.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> If my claims to immortal fame after death are shattered, make me immortal while I live.
>
> Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) had been well-known in the earlier part of this century in the West primarily as a poet, and to a lesser extent as a writer of short stories, plays and novels. The Oxford Companion to English Literature naturally sums up his literary achievements in the following way:

> Indian poet, was born at Calcutta. Of his works, which are marked by deep religious feeling, a strong sense of the beauty of earth and sky in his native land, and love of childhood (especially in "The Crescent Moon"), many have been translated into English. These include "Gitanjali", "The Crescent Moon", and "The Gardener", published in 1913; the three plays, "Chitra", "The King of the Dark Chamber", and "The Post Office" (the last two of which have been performed in London); "Sadhana" (addresses on life and its realization, 1913), "Fruit-gathering" (1916), "My Reminiscences" (1917), an introductory essay to the "Sakuntala" (1920), and "Red Oleanders" (a play, 1925). Tagore also wrote many short stories, of which only a few have been translated ("Hungry Stones", 1916; "Broken Ties", 1925). Tagore wrote mainly in Bengali, but he also wrote in English and translated into English some of his Indian writings.[1]

This summary, besides being brief, is also selective and may not seem satisfactory to those who are aware of the fact that Tagore was a prolific writer. Though much of the last 25 years of his life was spent in lecture tours abroad, 21 collections of his work appeared in this period alone. And it should also be noted that the English translations of his works fall far below the Bengali originals in literary style. He also introduced many new verse forms to literature.

But this essay is not about the poetic and literary genius of

Tagore. He was, among other things, a gifted composer, one of India's foremost painters, an educational thinker as well as an active social reformer. Will Durant in Part I - Our Oriental Heritage of the popular series on The Story of Civilization wrote in 1935 when Tagore was still alive:

> Today he is a solitary figure, perhaps the most impressive of all men now on earth; a reformer who has had the courage to denounce the most basic of India's institutions - the caste system - and the dearest of her beliefs - transmigration; a nationalist who longs for India's liberty, but has dared to protest against the chauvinism and self-seeking that play a part in the Nationalist Movement; an educator who has tired of oratory and politics, and has retreated to his ashram and hermitage at Santiniketan, to teach some of his new generation his gospel of moral self-liberation . . . .[2]

This is a portrait of Tagore as an educator and reformer outside what might be called the ivory tower of poetry and song. Though an aristocrat by birth and aristocratic in his artistic endeavors, he was a man with great proletarian sympathies. It was his sensitiveness and profound love for the helpless exploited peasants that led him to undertake the life-long work on education and social reform. Though he was an internationalist in outlook, his feet were firmly planted on the soil of his own land. He did not, as we shall see, always succeed in combining these two distinct temperaments in him which produced, as he grew older, many frustrations.

The following chapter will trace briefly the long life of Tagore. His family background, early childhood, his total failure in formal education, the first contact with the West, his rise to fame, travels and talks, starting the first school ("Boys' Monastery"), and the last years of his life will be described to indicate the ways in which his thoughts, interests, and activities developed.

Chapter III will deal with his educational ideas and experiments. It will contain a brief account of Tagore's encounter with formal education in British India, his early educational thought during the period between 1892 to 1900. This will be followed by an account of what may be called "The Santiniketan Period - 1900-1910", a period during which Tagore emphasized a system of nationalistic education. This will be followed by some consideration of his educational writings between 1910 to 1941, indicating the gradual change in Tagore's thinking in matters related to education. Since at this latter stage Tagore pleaded for a naturalistic education, a brief comparison will be attempted between the ideas of Tagore and Rousseau. This will be followed by an account of Tagore's love for the arts, and his efforts to incorporate aesthetic education within his philosophy of education. The chapter will end with a detailed word on Tagore's notion of internationalism and his attempt to promote the cause of international understanding through education.

Chapter IV will briefly deal with Tagore's ideas on village or rural reconstruction, the plan and policy statements, and the founding of Sriniketan or the Institute of Rural Reconstruction. This plan to train villagers in some important skill was the beginning of what could be called "Basic Education". As a slightly different version of this kind of education was later adopted and popularized by Gandhi, an attempt will be made to compare the ideas of Gandhi and Tagore on "Basic Education". The chapter will end with a brief note on Tagore's cautious approach to industrialization.

Chapter V, entitled "Critical Comments", will contain some criticisms

of Tagore's educational thoughts and practices. It will be pointed out that an ashramic system of education cannot serve a fast-changing society, nor is it easy to reconcile a spirit of internationalism with an ancient national system of education. Tagore's attempt to reconcile Western materialism with (what he thought to be) Eastern spiritualism will be shown to be unconvincing. But it will be acknowledged that the poet's efforts were not entirely fruitless.

References

1. Sir Paul Harvey (Ed.), The Oxford Companion to English Literature. Fourth revised edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 797.

2. Will Durant, Our Oriental Heritage. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1935, p. 621.

CHAPTER II

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

> When I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.
>
> Tagore

It is said, some are born great, some achieve greatness and upon some greatness is thrust. Rabindranath Tagore's greatness, in a way, had a little of each. He was born into a great family; he went through a long stressful period of inculcation striving hard to realize his full potentials and then it remained for the right opportunities to greet his way, bringing this unfolding genius to the limelight. Tagore's life history is much more than one of tracing the path of his greatness; it adds to the understanding of his ideas and ideals as revealed in his literary art and for our present purpose of his philosophy of education. There are at least three aspects of Tagore's life intimately related to his later educational endeavor: 1) his early childhood education within the family system, 2) his school days within accompanying failures and frustrations, and 3) a deep and lasting understanding of the Western world promoting in the poet a keen sense of internationalism and providing at the same time an escape for a restless artist within him. In looking at Tagore's biography one really has to see how in him the man, the artist, and the philosopher were blended together in a dynamic harmony, each shaping and sustaining the other. The following brief sketch of Tagore's life is, therefore, intended to show that Tagore's approach to education was not a subsidiary or a by-product of his literary undertakings, nor was this an accident; it was in the making right from the beginning.

The Tagore Family and Rabindranath's Early Childhood

Rabindranath Tagore was born on May 7, 1861 in Calcutta, four years after Indian Mutiny, in a family which was already distinguished in many respects and also gained some notoriety for its multicultural contacts. His father, Debendranath Tagore, was a man of wealth, education and spiritual discrimination, the son of Dwarkanath Tagore (1794-1846), who had come to Calcutta and amassed a great fortune while serving as a collector of revenue for the East India Company. The Tagores were an important family in Calcutta, for they had settled well there as early as 1760. In fact, it was one of the Tagores who built the East India Company's Fort William at Calcutta. Rabindranath once wrote: "My own family came floating to Calcutta upon the earliest tide of the fluctuating future of the East India Company."[1] Considered outcaste Brahmins, because a remote ancestor was supposed to have smelled the odor of cooked beef at the court of his Muslim ruler, the Tagores had fallen in the hierarchy of caste and were looked down upon by the orthodox Brahmins. The Muslims polluted the family's caste but the Tagores had little to lose and much to gain by associating with the growing number of British traders. As Rabindranath put it: "The unconventional code of life for our family has been a confluence of three cultures, the Hindu, Mohammedan and British."[2] Dwarkanath, Rabindranath's grandfather, had acquired great wealth and property together with a high reputation among Indians and foreigners. He came to be addressed as "Raja" (prince), because of his high style of living and his large public charities. To almost every important work of public benefit, throughout Bengal, Raja Dwarkanath

lent his personal and financial support. Dwarkanath twice broke the traditional Hindu prohibition against sea voyage, and went to England in 1842 and 1844, where he dined at Buckingham Palace with Queen Victoria. Dwarkanath did not return from his second visit to Europe. Like his friend Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of Brahmo Samaj (it was a reform movement in Hinduism, essentially a faith combining the philosophy underlying Hinduism with Christian ideals), who died in Bristol in 1833, Dwarkanath also died suddenly away from his home in London on August 1, 1846 at the age of 51. "He left a tradition of magnificence of wealth and prodigal expenditure, and many debts, which his son discharged."[3]

Debendranath was the eldest of the three children of Dwarkanath. Born in 1817, Debendranath's childhood was indeed exceptionally happy. He was brought up in luxury and pomp until he attained his youth. When his mother Digambari Devi separated from his father because he violated the Hindu custom by eating meat with the Europeans, Debendranath was left in his youth with his paternal grandmother, who lived a life of extreme simplicity and religious piety. The beloved grandmother died when he was 18. On the night before her death, Debendranath had a strange religious experience. He recalled:

> I was as if no longer the same man. A strong aversion to wealth arose within me. The coarse bamboo-mat on which I sat seemed to be my fitting seat, carpets and costly spreading seemed hateful, in my mind was awakened a joy unfelt before. I was then eighteen years old.[4]

Debendranath's aspirations grew towards spiritual rather than material rewards. He came to be known as Maharshi ("Great Rishi") leading the simple life of an ordinary pious man. He became the spiritual successor and leading patron of the monotheistic cult established by Raja Ram Mohan

Roy. Like a rishi of the days of the Upanishads, Debendranath spent his closing years in profound meditation. He described his own life style thus:

> To renounce everything and wander about alone, this was the desire that reigned in my heart. Imbued with His love I would roam in such lonely places that none would know; I would see His glory on land and water, would witness His mercy in different climes, would feel His protective power in foreign countries, in danger and in peril; in the enthusiasm of this desire I would no longer stay at home.[5]

The Maharshi did travel widely in India and mainly up the Ganges Valley and into the Himalayas. He ruled his life by the first verse of the Isha Upanishad:

> Whatever lives in this world, therein lives God. Whatever is, is His, not thine. Would'st thou enjoy, enjoy renouncing; covet no man's goods.

Rabindranath, fourteenth child of Debendranath, admired his father, but he felt neglected in his childhood. Debendranath was usually absent wandering and when he was at home, the children had to talk in whispers and could not even peep into his room.[6] He spoke of his childhood in the following words:

> I was very lonely - that was the chief feature of my childhood. I was very lonely. I saw my father seldom; he was away a great deal, but his presence pervaded the whole house and was one of the deepest influences on my life.[7]

Rabindranath had very little attention from his mother, Sarada Devi, for she was ill after the birth of the fifteenth child and had a vast household to look after. She left her infant son in the care of her eldest daughter Saudamini.

As said earlier, to understand the philosophy of Tagore, one should know the influences that were at work on him. Tagore belonged to a family which was at once ancient and modern. There was the progressive

reformistic zeal inspired by Western cultures, but its modernism was tempered by the deep religious and cultural tradition of Indian past. The house of the Tagores echoed with Vedic chants as well as recitations from Shakespeare and Marlowe. Thus the family of the Tagores represented the best of the tradition of the old and the new and stood apart with all its distinctive culture and tradition. As Tagore wrote in his Reminiscences:

> That one great advantage which I enjoyed in my younger days was the literary and artistic atmosphere which pervaded my house.[8]

The children were taught Sanskrit, Persian, English and Bengali. Readings from the Upanishads were followed by lessons in Sociology, Anatomy and Chemistry.[9] Such was the house in which Tagore was born: "All the surging tides of the Indian Renaissance followed round his daily life."[10]

Rabindranath's elder brother's sisters-in-law and cousins were also parts of the family's glory and distinctions by the 1870's. The eldest brother, Dwijendranath, was a man of intellect, a philosopher and a mathematician at the same time. His long poem Svapnaprayan (Dream Journey) is a masterpiece and has survived as a Bengali classic. He was a composer of music and for the first time introduced the use of piano in Bengali music. The second eldest brother of Rabindranath, Satyendranath, was the first Indian to be admitted to the prestigious Indian Civil Service. He was a fine scholar of Sanskrit. He translated his father's autobiography into English. The third son, Hemendranath, died at the age of 40. He was in charge of tutoring young Rabindranath and his friends. He had insisted that children should be taught their mother tongue. The fifth eldest, Jyotirindranath, was a pioneer in almost every field. He was a musician,

composer, poet, dramatist and artist. He "would spend days at his piano engrossed in the creation of new tunes".[11] Rabindranath's cousin Gunendranath was a dramatist whose sons Gaganendranath and Abanindranath were to become two of India's foremost painters. His sister Svarnakumari Devi, Bengal's first woman novelist, also edited the monthly literary magazine Bharati which Jyotirindranath and Dwijendranath had started and to which Rabindranath began contributing at the age of 16. When he was only eight, a second cousin induced him to begin writing verses, and his elder brothers encouraged him to continue these experiments.

When Rabindranath reached boyhood he was under the hands of the servants or the "servocracy" as he used to say for their strict collective rule. Of these servants he had given us a humorous picture: "In the history of India the regime of the slave dynasty was not a happy one."[12] This experience in early childhood formed the genesis where he pleaded for the child's supreme need of free joyous movement.

The School Days

Tagore's formal education started at a very early age. The first school he went to was the Oriental Seminary of Gour Mohan Auddey. The only memory of it that lasted with him was that of painful and undignified physical punishment inflicted there. Next at the age of seven he was admitted into another school known as the Normal School. Tagore's only memory of it was the foul language of one of the teachers, which shocked him, and the compulsory community singing of English songs before the lesson began. Rabindranath described his school experience thus:

> In the usual course of things I was sent to school, but possibly my suffering was unusually greater than that of most other children. The non-civilized in me was sensitive; it had the

> great thirst for colour, for music, for movement of life. Our city built education took no heed of that living fact.[13]

Suddenly Debendranath opened the cage and the 11-year-old Rabindranath, accompanied by his father, set out on a four-month journey to the Himalayas. Their first halt was Santiniketan, now the Visva-Bharati. The father and the son spent the first few days of their journey at Santiniketan. It was the first free contact of Rabindranath in the midst of open nature. The poet wrote:

> It was evening when we reached Bolpur. As I got into the palanquin I closed my eyes. I wanted to preserve the whole of the wonderful vision to be unfolded before my waking eyes in the morning light. The freshness of the experience would be spoilt, I feared, by incomplete glimpses caught in the vagueness of the dusk.
>
> When I woke at dawn my heart was thrilling tremulously as I stepped outside . . . There was no servant rule here, and the only ring which encircled me was the blue of the horizon which the presiding goddess of these solitudes had drawn round them. Within this I was free to move about as I chose.
>
> Though I was yet a mere child my father did not place any restriction on my wanderings.[14]

Debendranath gave his gifted son lessons in selected pieces from Sanskrit, Bengali and English literature. In the evening the father chanted verses from Upanishads for the son and at night instructed him in astronomy. Later, the poet made an independent study of some of the Upanishads, especially Isa, Chandogya and Shvetashvatara. In his sermons and discourses passages from the Upanishads were invariably cited. Rabindranath not only enjoyed the immediate access to his father, but also the freedom from the hard discipline which had been imposed by house servants and school teachers. He wrote:

> As he allowed me to wander about the mountains at my will . . . and in the quest for truth he left me free to select my path . . . He held up a standard, not a disciplinary rod.[15]

On his return Rabindranath was welcomed to a new status in his family. His mother was impressed by his recitations of the Ramayan and gave him a seat of honor when the womenfolk would gather in her room.

Soon after he was sent to the Bengal Academy, an Anglo-Indian school. It was in this school that he wrote his first long poem, Abhilash ("Yearning"), which was published in 1874 in the family journal Tattva Bodhini Patrika with the introduction "by a twelve-year-old boy". The last school he went to was St. Xavier's with no better result. He felt that the teaching was as dull and mechanical as in the previous schools. Finally, at the age of 13, in 1875 he gave up going to school altogether.

Adolescence and the First Contact with the West

During his years of adolescence Rabindranath was learning about Hinduism, India and about East and West. One of his early patriotic poems was read by him in February, 1875 at the Hindu Fair. In March of the same year his mother Sarada Devi died. He was only 13 years and 10 months old and was looked after by his brother Jyotirindranath and his wife Kadambari Devi.

At the age of 17 his elder brother Satyendranath took him to England. Delighted with this opportunity to see the Western world, Rabindranath wrote a Bengali essay for the family monthly Bharati:

> If the remnants of Indian civilization were to become the foundation on which European civilization is to be built, what a most beautiful sight that would be! The European idea in which freedom predominates, and the Indian idea in which welfare predominates; the profound thought of the Eastern countries and the active thought of the Western

> countries; European acquisitiveness and Indian conservatism; the imagination of the Eastern countries and the practical intelligence of the West - what a fullness will emerge from a synthesis of these two.[16]

This view of Tagore contained the embryo of his latter message to the West, Japan and China. In England he attended some classes in the University College, London (Henry Morley's class on English literature) and was taken in with the friendly English family of Dr. Scott. The third daughter of Dr. Scott grew very fond of him and taught him several Irish and English songs. Rabindranath wrote letters home, praising the freedom with which men and women could meet each other in English society and published in Bharati an article where he compared the position of women in two different societies. Rabindranath's father was very conservative in social outlook, and was upset about the possibility that Rabindranath might have fallen in love with the doctor's daughter, a girl of his own age, and summoned him home. Rabindranath obeyed his father's command quite willingly. In 1880, Rabindranath returned home with his brother and his family. Rabindranath brought no degree with him from England; instead he brought new viewpoints, new experiences.

On his return home he settled down in Calcutta with his brother and sister-in-law Kadambari Devi. During this time he wrote his first musical play Valmiki Pratibha (The Genius of Valmiki) and gave its first performance with Valmiki played by Tagore himself. In 1883 the publication of Tagore's Prabhat Sangit (Morning Song) marked the emergence of a major poet.

In Touch with Life: Marriage and After

Two sudden changes brought to an end this idyllic period. First, his father arranged to have him marry an 11-year-old girl, the daughter of an employee of the family's East Bengal estates. The girl was no beauty and was almost uneducated. However, later she proved to be an excellent wife. Then five months later, on April 19, 1884, his beloved sister-in-law Kadambari Devi committed suicide by swallowing an overdose of opium. This tragic death left a very deep impression and wounded Rabindranath more deeply than any other event in his life. He recollected:

> I was utterly bewildered. All around, the trees, the soil, the water, the sun, the moon, the stars, remained as immovably true as before; and yet the person who was as truly there, who through a thousand points of contact with life, mind and heart, was ever so much more true for me, had vanished in a moment like a dream . . . Alone on the terrace in the darkness of night I groped all over like a blindman trying to find upon the black stone gate of death some device or sign.[17]

It was the first great sorrow of his life. Within a few weeks of this, his third brother Hemendranath, entrusted with the responsibility of looking after his education, died. These deaths in the family left Tagore upset for a long time. In his grief Rabindranath went through a period of revolt against the conventions of society. Rabindranath's child-bride Mrinalini Devi offered him a loving heart and bore him five children. Despite all these, the poet grew restless and he described his feelings thus: "I was tormented by a furious impatience, an intolerable dissatisfaction with myself and all around me."[18] A striking poem of 1888, "Wind Hopes" (Duranta asa), showed his restlessness:

> O that I might be an Arab Bedouin! Beneath my feet the boundless desert, melting into the horizon; My horse

> gallops, the sand flies! Pouring my stream of life into the sky, day and night I go with my fire burning in my heart! My spear in my hand, courage in my heart, always homeless![19]

As his restlessness increased, in 1889 Tagore took his family to Cholapur. There he wrote a drama, Raja O Rani (The King and the Queen). In 1890, when his brother Satyendranath and a friend set out for a holiday in England, Rabindranath decided to go with them. As he explained:

> From some far away sky came to me a call of pilgrimage reminding me that we are all born pilgrims, pilgrims of this green earth. A voice questioned me "Have you been to the sacred shrine where divinity reveals itself in the thoughts and dreams and deeds of man?" I thought possibly it was in Europe, where I must seek it and know the full meaning of my birth as a human being in this world.[20]

On arriving in London, his first steps turned towards the Scott family's home. He could not, however, find them. He was again restless. He no longer wished to stay in London. The former charm had gone completely. He noted in his diary on October 5: "I am tired of this place: tired even of beautiful faces. I have therefore decided to return." Rabindranath's diary indicated that his principal reason for shortening his stay in London was purely a personal one, one of frustration and an inability to find any further excuse to stay on. Somehow he got through that month-and-a-half, and on November 3 he returned to Bombay, landing at midnight.

Soon after his return to India, he published the poem Manasi. Then, by the command of his father, he took charge of the management of the family's landed property in parts of East Bengal, North Bengal and Orissa. For the next 10 years Rabindranath spent most of his time over these estates. His daily contacts with the Indian peasants also led him to value India's tradition more highly than he had in his youth.

Many of his short stories deal with the lives of the villagers and his poems show a deep love of his natural surroundings. His chief concern from 1890 to the year of his death, 1941, was about the Indian peasants. The rural life's beauty, simplicity and harmony with nature impressed him and he idealized it as the true foundation of Indian culture. Then, in his 40's Tagore perceived the dichotomy between ruralism and urbanism, the peaceful village-centered society of India and the agressive nation states of the West. In 1901, in one of his essays he discussed the difference between the Hindu civilization and the European civilization. European civilization, he claimed, was essentially political in nature, whereas Hindu civilization was based on spiritual rather than political freedom; its goal was the religious liberation of the individual. The word 'nation' did not exist in any Indian language. He concluded:

> Man can achieve greatness through the society or he can achieve it through politics. But we are mistaken if we believe the building up of a nation on the European pattern is the only type of civilization and the only goal of man.[21]

The 19th Century, he pointed out, had been the century of the West, but the 20th Century would be the century of the East. He therefore advised India to remain true to her spiritual civilization.

Starting the "Boys' Monastery"

The beginning of the 20th Century was very important in Tagore's life. The poet turned to become a teacher. Remembering his unhappy schooldays, he wrote on the fundamentals of teaching and gained a new insight by putting his principles into practice; he was deeply impressed by the Topovanas or forest hermitages in ancient India, where the pupils used to stay with the teachers for the sake of learning. The very word

Upanishad means also the same thing, learning by a very close association between the teacher and his pupils. Tagore wanted to combine the ancient with the modern and on December 22, 1901 he inaugurated his ideal school of Santiniketan (the abode of peace) with five pupils. Tagore started his new school, naming it "Boys' Monastery" (Brahmacharya Ashram) after the ancient forest hermitages. In it he tried to put into practice some of his own idealistic conceptions of life.

Rise to Fame

Within a short period of his founding a new home in Santiniketan, death struck down one member of his family after another. His wife Mrinalini Devi fell seriously ill and was taken to Calcutta. She died on November 23, 1902, 20 years after her marriage. Rabindranath wrote a most sincere and loving tribute to her memory in the form of a series of poems, Smaran ("Remembrance"). Others to follow were his daughter Renuka in 1903, his father Maharshi in 1905 and his most gifted son Samanindranath in 1907. Rabindranath was suffering pain and bleeding from hemorrhage, and thought of his own possible death. But his impulse to write was stimulated rather than checked, and he produced in this period some of his finest religious poems, the Bengali collection entitled Gitanjali ("An Offering Song"). The longing of the lover for the beloved, of the soul for the Divine, were the frequent themes in these poems. Fifty-one of these 157 songs were later translated by him into English, which made him famous and later brought him the Nobel Prize for Literature. As usual, Tagore was again restless. He commented:

> I was very restless, just as I am now. That gave me the idea of a child pining for freedom, and the world anxious to keep it in its bounds, for it has its duties there, and that sort of thing. I was anxious to know the world. At that time, I thought that it was in the West that the spirit of humanity was experimenting and working. My restlessness became intolerable.[22]

So the poet, accompanied by his son and daughter-in-law, sailed again on May 27, 1912 for his third visit to the West. During his sea voyage he started to translate Gitanjali into English prose. Arriving in London in June, 1912, he showed his translations to his artist friend Rothenstein, who had visited India in 1910 in order to acquaint himself with Indian art and crafts. He had stayed in Calcutta at the Tagores' house where he came to know well the artist's brother Abanindranath and Gagnendranath. Rothenstein passed them on to the poet William Butler Yeats. The appreciation of Yeats redoubled Rothenstein's enthusiasm. On June 30, 1912 he invited a few friends to make the acquaintance of Tagore and his poetry. First in a private printing of 500 copies and then in a regular edition and finally in translations in French the Gitanjali was reported to be enjoying great popularity in Europe and America.

On October 28, 1912 Tagore, accompanied by his son and daughter-in-law, landed in New York. It was in the United States that Tagore wrote his first original serious prose in English which was later delivered as lectures at Harvard University and published as Sadhana (Realization of Life). In these lectures at Harvard the poet interpreted in his own way the ideals of ancient India. While he was in Illinois, the Indian Society edition of Gitanjali was published. The publication of his poems in English and their retranslation into other European languages brought

his work to the attention of the Nobel Prize Committee, which considered it as the most distinguished work with an idealistic meaning. When the poet was at Santiniketan, on November 13, 1913 (at the age of 52) he received the news of winning the Nobel Prize for his work Gitanjali. The news gave Rabindranath an enormous popularity within India. Tagore was the first Asian writer to receive the world's most distinguished literary honor. Within a few years, the outbreak of war, however, darkened his vision. During this period he wrote many other poems, which were all published in 1916 called Balaka (A Flight of Swans). He addressed it to the "Wonderer". Here he conceives of the life principle as a mighty current flowing from an invisible source towards another invisible goal - all movement, nothing stationary in the universe.

Between East and West

By the end of the First World War, the poet had already developed his educational thinking. The war with its destruction made him conscious of the need for interracial understanding. This he tried to achieve in two ways. First, by providing a center which would focus on the cultural heritage of the East, and secondly by making this center a meeting place of all cultures.

On May 15, 1920 Tagore left India accompanied by his son and daughter-in-law for a 15-month tour of Europe and the United States. The third visit to Europe was, however, fruitful in many respects. In New York Tagore made friends with the young English idealist Leonard K. Elmhirst, who became his chief associate in the development of Rural Reconstruction at Sriniketan.

In July, 1920 Tagore returned to India to stay at Santiniketan. He felt growing uneasiness as his ship approached India's shore in July, 1921. During the 15 months he had been away Gandhi, to whom Rabindranath himself had given the famous title "Mahatma" (the great soul) had given call for a nationwide movement to withhold Indian co-operation from the British courts, schools, business firms and social functions. The doctrine of destruction repelled Tagore. The boycott of schools and colleges was even more repugnant to him. The poet wrote to his friend Andrews on February 8, 1921:

> What irony of fate is this, that I should be preaching co-operation of cultures on this side of the sea just at the moment when the doctrine of the non-co-operation is preached on the other side? My own prayer is: let India stand for the co-operation of all peoples, of the world . . . For it is the mind of Man in the East and the West, which is ever approaching Truth in her different aspects from different angles of vision.[23]

A few weeks after his return to Calcutta Tagore gave two public lectures. The first, "The Union of Cultures", stressed his international ideal; the second, "The Call of Truth", focused on the deeper conflict between his view of truth and Gandhi's view of truth. Gathering around him a band of coworkers from India and the West and drawing from the funds during his recent tour, he inaugurated Visva-Bharati as an International University on December 23, 1921, offering independent facilities for higher studies in literature, research and fine arts. Tagore also made a gift to it of the copyright and its benefit on his Bengali books. The Nobel Prize money was already donated by him to the school. A few months later, when he returned to Calcutta from Santiniketan to explain the ideals of the newly founded Visva-Bharati, his lecture was received in stony silence, for he had failed to make any mention of the

national movement.

In September, 1922 Tagore left for a long tour of western and southern India. On his way back he revisited Gandhi's ashram at Sabaramati in Ahmedabad, where he addressed the students about the true meaning of sacrifice. Returning to Santiniketan in April, he left for Shillong, where he wrote a remarkable play, Rakta Karabi (later translated into English as "Red Oleanders" in 1925). This play shows Tagore's increasing concern with the basic problems of modern civilization. As his recurrent restlessness returned after the founding of Visva-Bharati, Tagore wanted a second voyage to East Asia. Tagore received an invitation from the President of the Universities Lecture Association of China, Mr. Liaong Chichad, himself a distinguished scholar of China. Welcoming Tagore in Peking in April, 1924, he summed up the Buddhists' message, i.e., compassion and peace, for which his country was indebted to India. Tagore's lectures in China were delivered extempore. Addressing the Chinese people, he said:

> I have come to China not with an attitude of a tourist or as a missionary bringing a gospel, but only as one seeking wisdom, like a pilgrim wishing to pay homage to the ancient culture of China in an attitude of reverence and love.[24]

But Tagore did have a message for China. As he said:

> I am not a poet, not a politician, nor a diplomat and can only say what I feel most sincerely in my heart. I feel that China is now going the same way as India. I love culture, I love life, I cannot bear to see Chinese culture endangered day by day. Therefore, I sincerely warn you, know that happiness is the growth of the power of the soul. Know that it is absolutely worthless to sacrifice all spiritual beauty to attain the so-called material civilization of the West.[25]

He advised the Chinese listeners to help India to build up the civilization he felt the world so desperately needed.

Tagore returned to India in the latter half of July via Japan where he stayed about six weeks and gave several lectures. Hardly two months at home, he got an invitation from the Republic of Peru to attend the centenary celebrations of her attainment of independence. So he sailed once more to the New World with Elmhirst. During the voyage across the Atlantic, Tagore suddenly fell ill. The visit to Peru had to be cancelled on his doctor's advice. Tagore was homesick for Santiniketan, so he returned to India. A few days after his return to his country, his elder brother Jyotirindranath died. Tagore had by then suffered so many bereavements that death had after all ceased to be a stranger.

In 1926 Tagore accepted an invitation from the Government of Italy and on May 15, 1926, accompanied by his son and daughter-in-law, sailed for Naples. On his arrival in Naples Tagore was received by the chief officials of the city. On June 7 the Governor of Rome held a public reception in the capital where he conveyed to the poet the greetings of the people of the city. On the following day Tagore delivered a public lecture on "The Meaning of Art". He was also received by King Victor Emmanuel III and attended a performance of his play Chitra which was staged in Italian. Later he visited England and Oslo, where he gave public lectures and was received by the King. After crowded receptions and lectures and engagements in Belgrade, Sofia, Athens, he visited Cairo and King Fuad presented him with a set of Arabic books for Visva-Bharati. In December he returned to India and spent the summer in the pleasant hill station of Shillong in Assam where he began his famous novel Tin Purus (Three Generations). In July, 1927 Tagore set out on his ninth foreign tour to the neighboring lands of Southeast Asia. In

Java and Bali Tagore was deeply impressed by their dance drama and cultural traditions. After a short visit to Thailand where he was warmly received, he delivered a lecture on Education at the University of Bangkok; he returned to India in December in time to preside over the annual celebration at Santiniketan.

In February, 1929 Tagore got an invitation to attend the triennial conference of the National Council of Education of Canada. To this conference Canada invited prominent educationists from all over the world. The Council's ideals were broad and progressive; it believed that whatever one country had attempted or achieved in the sphere of education should be shared with other countries, in order that knowledge may be pooled to mutual advantage. On March 1, 1929 Tagore sailed for Canada and landed in April. In Victoria he gave a lecture on "The Philosophy of Leisure". Here he talked about the necessity of leisure in human life. He decried the materialistic Western society where time is considered very valuable and where leisure is a rare luxury. Next day he made a second speech in Vancouver, "The Philosophy of Literature", and it contained incidental references to his views on modern art. Tagore got invitations from several universities in the United States, among them California, Harvard and Columbia, and so from Canada the poet sailed for Los Angeles. On arrival in Los Angeles he lost his passport. He felt irritated by the formalities to which he was subjected by the Immigration officers. He had to cancel his engagements in the United States and sailed for Japan. He spent nearly a month in Japan. After a pleasant halt in Saigon, where he was received very warmly, Tagore returned to India.

In early March, Tagore sailed for Europe to keep his engagement for the Hibbert lectures at Oxford. Arriving in England on May 11, Tagore spent the first few days at Woodbrooke, near Birmingham. He delivered the Hibbert lectures at Oxford, which were later published by Allen and Unwin entitled Religion of Man, dedicated to Elmhirst. This time Tagore stayed in England for two months, the last 10 days of which were spent at Dartington Hall in Devon, where Elmhirst was conducting an academy on the model of Sriniketan.

After an exhibition of his paintings in Birmingham and London, Tagore left for Berlin in July. After nearly a month's rest in Geneva, Tagore left for Moscow. Tagore gave a full record of his visit and impressions in a series of letters he wrote home, which were later published as Rashiar Chithi (Letters from Russia). Tagore had a crowded program in Russia and visited many institutions. An exhibition of his paintings was also held in Moscow. Returning to Germany, Tagore left for the United States. A reception was also organized for him at Carnegie Hall where he spoke on Education. An exhibition of his paintings was held in New York. In January, 1931, Tagore returned to India via London, where he had a long talk with Bernard Shaw. Thus, Tagore had seen the Western World in its different phases and that was his last visit to the West.

Last Years

During 1930 to 1940, Tagore wrote a number of novels. His very first production after the long foreign tour was a music and dance sequence called Navin (The New). This was produced in Santiniketan in March, 1931 and later staged in Calcutta at the Empire Theatre. In the midst of his

public activities, Tagore wrote two new plays, Tasher Desh (The Kingdom of Cards) and Chandalika (The Untouchable Girl). Before the year was over, Tagore published two new novels and a drama written in prose, Dui Bon (Two Sisters), Malancha (The Gardener) and Bansari (The name of the main heroine).

In 1934 Tagore went on a cultural tour of Ceylon. It was during his stay in Ceylon that Tagore completed his last novel, Char Adhyay (Four Chapters).

In February, 1936 Tagore delivered three lectures in Calcutta, "Ideals of Education", "Place of Music in Education" and "Education Naturalized". In February, 1937 Tagore delivered the convocation address at the Calcutta University. It was the first occasion in the 80 years of its history when a private citizen was offered this privilege. It was also the first occasion when the address was delivered in Bengali and not in English. Tagore used the occasion as a plea for the use of mother tongue as the medium of education.

On August 7, 1940, the University of Oxford held a special convocation at Santiniketan to award a doctorate to Tagore. Before the year ended, three short stories were published in a volume, Teen Sangi (The Trio).

In September, while Tagore was in Kalimpong in the eastern Himalayas, he complained of feeling unwell. He was brought to Calcutta, and after two months he returned to Santiniketan. During this time he wrote a number of beautiful poems which are included in the collection Bed of Sickness and Health. His fever rose each day. The doctors decided that he must be removed to Calcutta for an operation. The decision upset him: "Why can't I be allowed to die in peace? Have not I lived enough?" When

the nature of the operation was explained, he grudgingly submitted, murmuring: "Perhaps I shall not see these trees again."

On July 25, 1941 he was taken to Calcutta where the operation was performed on the morning of July 30. His condition speedily deteriorated after the operation and he gradually lost consciousness, never to recover again. He ceased to breathe at midday of August 7, 1941 in his ancestral home in Calcutta. The poet's message, however, was sent earlier: "Raise my veil and look at my face proudly, O Death, my Death."

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CHAPTER III

EDUCATIONAL IDEAS AND EXPERIMENTS

Let your life lightly dance on the edges of Time like dew on the tip of a leaf.

Tagore

Originating with his unhappy school days, education remained a lifelong passion with Tagore. He considered education as one of the greatest liberating forces, and he looked upon it initially as a personal matter - a problem of individual development. But with the growth of his experience, he came to realize its social significance, its value as a vehicle of national progress. As with many other great thinkers, Tagore's idea on education started within a historical perspective and slowly evolved from certain scattered ideas to a matured pronouncement on contemporary education.

Education in British India and Tagore

By the time Tagore was born, English became the prescribed medium of instruction at the higher levels of education. Further, Macaulay, who was in charge of British education in India, gave his whole-hearted support to Western education, and his views were eventually accepted by the British rulers in India. On February 2, 1835 he wrote a minute which was endorsed on March 7 by the Governor, Lord William Bentinck. According to this, in future the teaching of high schools and colleges was to be in English and this decision has had its effect on educational policy in India right down to the present time. Today opinions still differ as they did then as to whether this was a step in the right direction.

However, the English schools were not unpopular with Indian students and their parents. There was an utilitarian aspect to English education; it promised a remunerative job in government employment and an improved social status that came with it. As a result, the indigenous system of education was replaced by a large number of private and somewhat mercenary schools.

There was, however, a demand in many thoughtful circles for education in the Indian languages and for a truly national system of education. Some were inspired by the ideals and pattern of educational systems of the forest colonies of ancient India and founded institutions after that model. The Gurukula founded at Hardwar by Swami Saradananda and the Central Hindu College founded at Benaras by Mrs. Annie Besant were the products of this movement. Tagore was much influenced by the Gurukula system, perhaps due to his early education and strong education in Sanskrit as well as in Indian philosophy. In 1892 Tagore wrote his first article on education, viz., Siksar Herpher[1] or "Our Education and Its Incongruities". This was the beginning of a series of such attempts through which Tagore's original and scattered ideas can be seen to have developed in different phases to an articulated system of educational thought in modern India.

Early Educational Thought (1892-1900)

In his essay Siksar Herpher published in 1892, Tagore forcefully advised his countrymen to reorient the educational system of the country. Here Tagore made a plea for finding ways and means to make the process of education more lively, a point that was to become one of the most recurring themes in his later educational writings. He condemned

contemporary education for being lifeless and mechanical, lacking in any intrinsic value for the students. Such education, he thought, was solely motivated by immediate goals of getting jobs in the Government. His craving for an intrinsically motivating system of education - not a job-oriented training - seems to have come from Tagore's own unhappy experience with his formal school education. At this point, Tagore accused the introduction of English language as a major reason for killing a child's interest in education. He argued that education given only through the mother tongue could sustain a child's interest and help him to be creative in his own way. Later in his autobiography Tagore put forth his argument in the following way:

> It was because we were taught in our own language that our mind quickened. Learning should as far as possible follow the process of eating. When the taste begins from the first bite, the stomach is awakened to its function before it is loaded, so that its digestive juices get full play. Nothing like this happens, however, when the Bengali boy is taught in English . . . While one is choking and spluttering over the spelling and grammar, the inside remains starved, and when at length the taste is felt, the appetite has vanished . . . While all around was the cry for English teaching, my third brother was brave enough to keep us to our Bengali course. To him in heaven my grateful reverence.[2]

While there is a lot to be said in favor of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, Tagore seems to have missed the point that sometimes it is not merely a medium, but that it may carry a limited message and can be an underdeveloped method for sound education that can be blamed for its failure. One can argue that given the early educational goals of those days (which continued with very few changes until about two decades after India's independence) and the method adopted in the classrooms, any medium would have failed to have any effect.

Tagore's more persuasive argument for the adoption of the mother

tongue, however, was in regard to education of the masses. In March, 1893, writing for the educational column of Sadhana under the general title Prasanga Katha[3] ("The Relevant Talk"), Tagore pleaded that education of the millions was possible only through the mother tongue. However, at this point he seems to have gone back to his earlier claim that formal education should be in the mother tongue. He urged the educated people of the country to disseminate valuable scientific knowledge and culture of other countries among the common people through the medium of their mother tongues. Obviously in this scheme a foreign language like English had to be a basic part of the curriculum in the formal educational system to make this envisioned process of mass education a reality. Later in 1893 he clarified this aspect of his argument about the mother tongue in an essay, Siksar Herpher Prabandher Anurbriti[4] ("Sequel to Siksar Herpher", June, 1893; more about Incongruities in Education), where he refuted the suggestion that he was opposed to the study of English language. On the contrary, he advocated that English had to be learned by a great number of Indians. He stressed its value in acquiring information about the Western sciences, in getting rid of the age-old inertia and superstitions from the minds of the people, and finally, in promoting a better understanding of world culture for individuals and for national enrichment. This aspect of Tagore's early educational thinking anticipated, in many respects, what was to become a major feature of his later educational philosophy, viz., internationalism, in education. Nevertheless, in the early phase he still seemed to vacillate between a passionate feeling for mother tongue education and also the realization that a foreign language like English could not just be disposed of from the educational

curriculum. In fact, in the following years he wrote several articles renewing his plea for the mother tongue as the medium of education. In 1898, writing for the Prasanga Katha ("Relevant Talk"), he claimed that scientific studies can take root in a country only when they spread among the masses and it can be possible only when science can be taught through the mother tongue.

During this period Tagore's ideas about mother tongue education were perhaps more passionate and patriotic than practical. In spite of a number of writings on the topic, he did not lay out the technical aspects of education through mother tongue or of the teaching of English language to which he conceded an important place in the educational system. For example, while he thought that English language was essential for learning about science and Western cultural ideas, he did not mention at what level of education there should be, if at all, a gradual change or a direct switch from mother tongue to English language as the medium of teaching. Besides, the distinction between the medium of instruction and the contents to be included in the curriculum was never mentioned in his writings. One gets the impression from his writings that he was probably thinking of mother tongue as the primary medium of instruction with English occupying a somewhat lesser position in the curriculum. But such a scheme could hardly realize his goal of science education which in Tagore's time at least was very much dependent on foreign language sources. So, for any education of sciences, particularly in higher levels, English language medium could not be dispensed with immediately. Besides, with so many languages in India and numerous local dialects, the problem of education through the mother

tongue would have become an exceedingly difficult one within an integrated system of education. Tagore seemed to be hung in a contradiction between his love for mother tongue and a totally indigenous system of education and also his ideas of internationalism in education. Ironically enough, the problem of language in instruction is one which has not been completely resolved in India even today.

Santiniketan Period (1900-1910)

In this patriotic phase of his intellectual development, Tagore directed his energy from 1901 towards the starting of a school at Santiniketan in Bolpur. For the model of his school he looked back to ancient India and, following the old tradition, he called his school an Ashram. In 1905 he took a leading part in the nationalistic independence movement and at the same time wrote and spoke about political, social and educational problems. For the first time he emphasized the need to view India's struggle for freedom primarily in its social context. For him it was in fact a question of finding a new basis of social integration which had been destroyed by the impact of industrial civilization of the West. Through a series of articles read out in various public gatherings and published in Vanga darsan[5] during July, 1904 to September, 1905, namely Swadeshi Samaj (July, 1904), its sequel (September, 1904), Saphalatar Sadupay (March, 1905), Avastha O Vyavastha (September, 1905), etc., he pointed out that Indian tradition had always looked towards the society and not towards the state for its continuous cultural existence and accordingly presented to the nation his own plans and programs for the purpose of attaining complete self-determination.

In 1904 in an article,"University Bill",[6] Tagore pointed out a clear case for self-determination in matters related to education. He also criticized again the alien character of British pattern of education as unsuitable for the Indian society. He considered: "The most essential thing is to take the responsibility of our education on our own shoulders. Our only duty therefore is to make our own effort."[7] At this point Tagore seems to have taken up his earlier claims for indigenous system of education through mother tongue a step further. However, even here he shows no sign of having resolved the conflict between his patriotic feelings for Indian system of education and his love for multiculturalism in education.

In April, 1905 in an article, Chatrader prati Sambasan[8] ("Address to Students"), Tagore asked the students to correlate their education with real life situations. Although he had made this point earlier in Siksar Herpher, he advocated a realistic education acquired through independent efforts. He also pleaded that education should be broadly based and organically linked with the life of the community. He argued that the education of the human child abstracted from his social background must always remain ill adopted. He looked upon education as a vehicle of national progress and wanted it to be based on the real needs of the country. In another article, Svadhin siksa[9] ("Independent Education"), Tagore discussed the important problems of education for the vast masses in the country. In an article, Siksa-Samasya[10] ("The Problem of Education"), he pointed out that his own conception of nationalistic education was linked with the ideal and tradition of the people of the land. Here he stated that he was much influenced by the education prevailing in the

forest colonies of ancient India and pointed out that the primary condition of a true education should be residence at the home of the teacher and a life of disciplined brahmacharya during the entire period of studentship. In this article for the first time Tagore pointed out that ideal schools had to be in nature, away from human habitation. He said:

> There the tutors will be occupied in quiet studies and teaching, and the pupils will grow up in the sacred and profound atmosphere of learning.[11]

Although in Siksar Herpher (1892) there was an indirect reference to the place of nature in education, the first clear statement of his philosophy of naturalistic education was made in this essay. The importance of the essay thus lies in the fact that it gives for the first time a clear indication of Tagore's basic difference with the educational policy of the National Council of Education (NCE) and presents a definite and comprehensive exposition of his own constructive plan for a national system of education. It also shows some fundamental aspects of his educational philosophy dominating not only this particular period but also the entire structure of his educational thought and activity, namely residential ashram education, education in natural surroundings and education in an atmosphere of simplicity. It is interesting to note that Tagore's more patriotic concept of education of the people and for the people was not only in conflict with his later emphasis on internationalism, but it was at the same time both utilitarian and idealistic. While he pleaded for education of the masses for achievement of the social goals and scientific progress, he at the same time emphasized the need for education for its own sake.

Educational Writings (1910-1941)

As a necessary sequel to his earlier essay on the problems of education, Siksa Samsasya, Tagore wrote the well-known essay Topovan in January, 1910 in which he talked about education in Nature, referring to the ancient Indian system of education in forest colonies. Tagore also introduced here his ideas about the education of the "feelings", that is, an intimate feeling for and a communion with nature, as distinguished from the education of the senses and intellect. He wrote:

> If we believe that the chief aim of education for an Indian is to be initiated into this unique pursuit of India, then we must constantly remember that neither the education of the senses, nor the education of the intellect, but the education of the feelings should receive the place of honour in our schools. Our true education is possible only in the forest, through intimate contact with nature and purifying austere pursuits.[12]

In the same essay Tagore also reiterated his earlier view favoring a true national system of education, one not based on Western ideals but rooted in the country's own past tradition and culture.

In 1912 in another essay, Dharma siksa[13] ("Religious Education"), Tagore talked for the first time about religious education. A true education in religion, according to him, comes from within and is possible only in "a proper place and a proper atmosphere". This, he claimed, was only possible in an ashram. He argued:

> What is really necessary is neither a temple nor external rites and rituals. We want the ashram, where the clear beauty of nature combined with the pure pursuits of the human mind has created a sacred site of worthy endeavours. Nature and the human spirit wedded together shall constitute our temple and selfless good deeds our worship . . . . Such a spot, if found, shall provide the true atmosphere for religious education. For, as I have said before, according

> to the mysteries of human nature, religious education is possible only in the natural atmosphere of piety; all artificial means only pervert or obstruct it.[14]

The spiritual tradition of India and its relevance for a national system of education was also emphasized in the letter written from Chalford, Laksya O Siksa[15] ("Aims and Education", in November, 1912). The idea of a national system of education in forest colonies (Topovans) reappeared in May, 1933 in Tagore's writing, Ashram Vidyalayer Sucana[16] ("Beginning of the Ashram school") and again in a lecture on December 23, 1934 entitled Dharabahi[17] ("In Continuous Flow"). In his address, Tagore emphasized the ideal simplicity of ancient Topovanas after which the Ashram school was modeled. In another address to the Ashramik Sangha[18] ("The Old Boys Associations"), delivered on May 9, 1936, Tagore was quite emphatic about the fact that his Ashram school idea was not a concept borrowed from alien culture, but was rooted in India's own past. He said:

> I did not set about to imitate anybody, nor have I followed the educational system of any foreigner. I had neither the interest nor the experience in that direction. I had in my heart, since childhood, the picture of the Tapovans, which I had found in the works of Kalidas.[19]

Tagore's idea of the residential school and his whole philosophy of education around it began to be more pronounced and definitive starting from 1916. In "My School", one of the lectures delivered in the United States, Tagore proclaimed his basic theory of a residential, naturalistic and spiritual education in an atmosphere of simplicity. In February, 1919 in an article, "The Centre of Indian Culture",[20] Tagore made a major statement on Visva-Bharati. Here, as also in an earlier essay, Siksa-samasya ("The Problems of Education", 1906), Tagore criticized the alien character of the existing educational system and advocated a truly

national system of education rooted in the country's tradition. He suggested that:

> We should generate somewhere a centripetal force which will attract and group together from different parts of our land and different ages all our own materials of learning and thus create a complete and moving orb of Indian culture.[21]

In the same writing Tagore also gave a more definite shape to his concept of aesthetic education and emphasized the important role of fine arts and music in educational curriculum. The same essay also contained Tagore's idea of education as a vehicle of social change. He wrote: "Our centre of culture should not only be centre of the intellectual life of India but the centre of her economic life also."[22]

Both Siksa-samsya (1906) and "The Centre of Indian Culture" (1919) were inspired by the motive of enhancing the fundamental features of a truly national system of education in India. But Tagore's somewhat narrow nationalism in education was undergoing rapid changes through his wide international tours after he received the Nobel Prize in 1913. Tagore was fundamentally a humanitarian, so his interest in education could not have remained parochial. In a letter to his friend Charles Andrew on October 3, 1920, he wrote: "Although Europe has come close to us by the visit of ours, now I know more closely than ever before that Santiniketan belongs to all the world and we shall have to be worthy of the great fact."[23]

The shifting of emphasis from nationalism to internationalism became more pronounced in Tagore's lecture during his foreign tour, "An Eastern University" (1921) later collected in Creative Unity. In his lecture Tagore gave a definite international character to Visva-Bharati. He said:

> Being strongly impressed with the need and the responsibility, which every individual today must realize according to his power, I have formed the nucleus of an International University in India, as one of the best means of promoting mutual understanding between the East and the West.[24]

In 1923, an article appeared under the joint authorship of Tagore and C. F. Andrew proclaiming the Visva-Bharati ideal as a living relationship between the East and West.

Throughout his lectures during his foreign visits, Tagore tried to create an international understanding of his educational institutions and ideals. In 1924, during his visit to China, Tagore talked about the aesthetic and artistic education. The same year Tagore delivered a lecture, "The School Master", in Japan and talked about his idea of naturalistic education. "Nature's own purpose", he pointed out, was "giving the child its fullness of growth and fullness of humanity."

Tagore, however, was interested in more than just the education of the mind. In Alochana ("A Discourse")[25] Tagore talked, among other things, about the need for physical exercise and physical education in any educational system. He said:

> It is my firm conviction that there is a connection between the education of the body and the education of the mind, between the activeness of the body and the activeness of the mind. The rhythm of our life is broken, if a harmony is not produced between the two.[26]

Yet another major aspect of Tagore's educational ideas during this period was concerned with the change in Indian villages, and the role education should play in social reconstruction programs. In 1931, in an address entitled Palliseva ("Service to the Villages") delivered at Sriniketan, Tagore explained his ideals of village service through Sriniketan. Again on February 6, 1932 in an address, Deserkaj ("The

Nation's Work"), on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Sriniketan, Tagore said that the part of the aims and activities of Sriniketan was to improve the villages.

Tagore's writing during this period as well as in the earlier ones was on a wide variety of educational topics, from mother tongue education to internationalism, village upliftment to aesthetic education. Tagore was writing regularly trying to disseminate his educational ideals among his countrymen and throughout the world. However, his philosophy of education became definite and clear towards the later part of his life. Since his writings and addresses were on so many topics, scattered throughout the period of his development from a young sentimental writer to a mature thinker on educational problems, it may be worthwhile to look into some general principles of his educational thought.

Tagore's Philosophy of Naturalistic Education

In Tagore's conception of education, nature has a pre-eminent position. Tagore talked about Nature in the sense of the physical animate and inanimate Universe of land, water and the sky and also the unsophisticated and pure form of human tendency - primitive, instinctive and above all "human". Both these aspects of "Nature" work in close harmony with each other and both find their best expression in each other. He believed that there was a kinship between Nature and man. According to Tagore, the artificiality in education has made out an average school "an education factory - lifeless, colourless, dissociated from the context of the universe, within bare white walls staring like eyeballs of the dead".[27] Tagore adored the ancient Indian education confined to the

hermitages in forests away from noisy life of human habitation and in close connection with Nature.

In his first educational writings, Siksar Herpher (1892), there is an indirect reference to the place of Nature in education. In this writing he advocated a free joyous and spontaneous life of impulses for the young in the twofold fields of Nature and imagination, so that it may serve to make their bodies alert and develop them in all respects.[28] His idea of an education in Nature is based on the ideal of harmonious development of the individual in body, mind and spirit. He states: "To remain in this state of natural discipline is happy for young children. It helps their full development."[29] Tagore made the first clear observation:

> If an ideal educational institution has to be founded, arrangement for it should be made away from human habitation, in solitude, under the sky, on a wide field, amidst trees and plants.[30]

This emphasis on education in Nature is based on a fundamental assumption that man has an irresistible attraction for Nature and this attraction is even more powerful during childhood, "when he feels naturally drawn in body and spirit towards fields, trees and plants from all of which he receives a call of invitation".[31] A child's attraction for Nature, Tagore pointed out, has great biological significance. Man requires a large space for his full growth. This is true both for his mental and physical development: "During the formative years of the mind, it requires a large space around it. The space is present in Nature in an ample, diverse and beautiful manner."[32] A city life is harmful to a child's development because it cannot provide enough space. Thus the children cannot grow up healthy and happy in body, mind and spirit.

he pleaded that education in Nature has also some intrinsic value. "So before being engulfed in wordly affairs", he recommended, "let children receive the upbringing of Nature during their formative period."[33] "The trees and plants, the clear expanse of the sky, the pure free air, the clean cool tank, and the wider aspect of Nature", he observed, "are not less necessary than benches and blackboards, books and examinations."[34]

Education from direct sources in Nature also gives a healthy exercise to our intellectual powers like observation, experimentation and reasoning in an easy way, as well as the ability to gain knowledge independently from direct sources, as distinguished from books. "This growth of experience", said Tagore:

> leads to forming instinct, which is the result of Nature's own method of instruction. The boys of my school have acquired instinctive knowledge of the physiognomy of the tree. By the least touch they know where they can find a foothold upon the apparently inhospitable trunk; they know how far they can take liberty with the branches, how to distribute their bodies' weight so as to make themselves least burdensome to branchlets.[35]

Besides, education in Nature possesses spiritual value, the attainment of which he considered as the highest aim of education: "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence."[36] "To learn to regard spontaneously fire, air, water, land, and the Universal spirit", he observed, "is true learning."[37] Such a learning is possible in close contact with Nature. Union with Nature is, therefore, an essential medium through which human spirit can realize the Infinite. A major theme of his writings is the yearning of the Finite for the Infinite. Union with Nature is, therefore, an essential medium through which human

spirit can realize the Infinite. The yearning for the Unknown and the Infinite is, according to him, the true essence of religious education, which is not even possible in a temple or church but through an intimate contact with Nature.[38] According to Tagore, as Dr. Radhakrishnan observes, "the best way to derive divine inspiration is to lose ourself in the contemplation of nature".[39]

Tagore, however, admitted that in a civilized life complete naturalism is not possible; some artificial aids may be necessary, but their use should be minimized. His cry of "Back to Nature", his belief in the essential goodness of the child, his emphasis on activity as the essential aspect of child's growth in Nature, all make him a naturalist.

Tagore and Rousseau

Tagore's great emphasis on education in Nature would naturally suggest Rousseau's influence in this direction. It is not necessary to go to Rousseau to find the source of this aspect of Tagore's educational philosophy. Tagore owed a good deal to Rousseau, but his originality lay in the fact that he tried to apply Rousseau's ideas with India's age-old ideal of Ashramic education. Rousseau's idea of education in Nature is based on the principle that Nature is good; all that is required is not to oppose it in any way in education. Leave Emile to grow up with the tendencies which he was born with and he is sure to be intelligent and virtuous. Similarly, Tagore observed that during the early period of education children should come to their lesson of truths through natural processes - directly thorugh Nature (biological, organismic and developmental), men (teachers) and things (cultured environment). Tagore

observed that the object of education was to give man the unity of truth.

Rousseau believed in the child's unfettered freedom. His "Emile" was called "the child's charter". For Rousseau, a child was better educated in the wilderness of the country, away from the corrupting influences of the city, in close contact with Nature. And he had no faith in formal education. Similarly, Tagore's educational experiment began first not at Santiniketan but earlier in 1896-97 on his father's estate at Shelaidh in East Bengal, with the education of his son. He wanted him to be brought up in the country in unfettered freedom of which he himself had been deprived in his childhood.

Formal education, it has been noted, played only a minor role in Tagore's educational plan. His primary emphasis was always on the training for life or, as Rousseau had said, the "unfolding of personality". "Simplicity of living" was the main principle of student life at Santiniketan. Like Rousseau, it was a fundamental tenet with Tagore. Rousseau wanted "Emile" to pass through a period of physical hardening, living as simply as a peasant in a cottage to be better prepared for the battle of life. Tagore, however, looked at the question from a different angle, often using "simplicity" and "poverty" as interchangeable terms. "Poverty", he wrote, brings us into complete touch with life and the world; living richly is living in a world of lesser reality. The latter may be good for one's pleasure and pride, but not for one's education.

Both Tagore and Rousseau stressed the vital yearning in human beings for union with Nature and to simplicity. But they differed about

the actual age limit for the purpose. Tagore wanted that for the first few years in the life of the child, at least up to the age of seven, should be left entirely in the hands of Nature: "Before one becomes completely engulfed in the whirlpool of practical life, during the period of learning and growth the assistance of Nature is absolutely essential."[40] "This essential non-civilized education has to be completed in the hands of Nature."[41] There should be a compromise, argued Tagore, between the noncivilized and civilized in man; this should be in proportion of water and land on our globe, the former predominating.[42] It is thus evident that Tagore wanted a compromise between the noncivilized and civilized elements in the child's education. Though this view of Tagore is very similar to Rousseau's doctrine of "Negative Education" in Nature and naturalistic education in early years, Tagore desired a compromise between civilized and noncivilized elements, between Nature and society.

Rousseau's doctrine of Negative Education has been subjected to criticism on several grounds, but Tagore's approach to natural education is free from most of these charges. Unlike Rousseau, Tagore did not entirely disown society; on the contrary, he attached equal importance to the "World of Nature" and the "World of Man" and declared the union of both the worlds as the optimum goal of life and education. Again, unlike Rousseau, Tagore did not entirely discard the use of books; it is an excessive dependence on books at the cost of direct experience and independent thinking that he criticized. Rousseau's approach was from beginning to end only theoretical; he never had the occasion to apply and test his doctrine in the practical field, where as Tagore's idea took for the first time an institutional form, a residential school

to start with.

Artistic Aspects of Tagore's Educational Ideas

Tagore's major practical and original contribution, however, lies perhaps in Santiniketan's extracurricular activities, which have played an unquestionable role in humanizing Indian education. Tagore gave aesthetic culture a pre-eminent position in his ideal picture of education and pointed out that the aesthethc aspect of human life is as important as the intellectual. He regretted the neglect of aesthetic education in contemporary schemes of educational curriculum. He wrote:

> We almost completely ignore the aesthetic life of man, leaving it uncultivated, allowing weeds to grow there. Therefore, again, I have to give utterance to a truism and say with profound seriousness that music and the fine arts are among the highest means of national self-expression, without which the people remain inarticulate.[43]

In an article entitled "My Educational Mission" (June, 1931), Tagore stressed the essential artistic character of his institution. He wrote: "I am an artist and not a man of science, and, therefore, my institution has assumed the aspect of a work of art and not that of a pedagogical laboratory."[44]

Music and aesthetic culture in general were given an important place in Santineketan school from the very beginning and provision was made for the regular teaching of art, music and dancing. There was also arrangement for the teaching of drawing and painting in the Brahmacharya ashram from the earliest days. Tagore wanted joy brought back into the life of the Indian people through art, music, drama and dancing. All these dances were made up by him; the footwork and body movements were not strictly classical. He was convinced that dancing is a splendid

exercise for developing the body. Besides, staging of the drama, according to Tagore, facilitated subconscious assimilation of ideas. This was one of the root principles in Tagore's method of education. Tagore himself took particular interest in the activities and very often participated personally in the coaching and acting. He said: "If there is no joy in the heart, life lacks sufficient power to protect itself; it gives way at the slightest opposition."[45] Tagore lamented the lack of aesthetic culture which was looked down upon in the then India as effeminate luxury. He said:

> But they do not know that manly heroism is closely related to beauty; when there is want of joy in life, there is also want of heroism. A hard, dried-up log of wood has no strength; strength resides in a mighty tree that has burst into flower and foliage through sheer joy of vitality.[46]

Tagore also gave art fundamental importance in individual and national life. It is the expression of the innermost desires and feelings of man which he thought has universal and lasting values. According to Tagore, the capacity to work and capacity to enjoy go hand in hand. He pointed out:

> In fact the expression of joy is the manifestation of vitality. To smother this expression will lead to the smothering of the vitality of a nation . . . The nation that forgets how to enjoy also forgets how to work. It is in our country alone that the wise despise enjoyment, regard aesthetic pleasure as frivolity, and look down upon art as a lowly pursuit that obstructs real work. This is only an expression of the inner poverty of our spirit. It is enfeebling our capacity for real work.[47]

Tagore, therefore, made the teaching of Indian art and music the most important feature of Visva-Bharati. In a paper, Siksa o Smskrite Samgiter Sthan ("The Place of Music in Education"), read by Tagore at the New Education Fellowship Centre, he outlined the place of music in his

scheme of education. He pointed out that both classical and folk music were once cultivated and patronized by all the leading citizens in the country, and proficiency in music used to be considered as a proof of culture in those days. He expressed shock because the condition had changed to such a great extent. Love and respect for music and art had greatly diminished under the artificial demands of modern education and so music had failed to find any place in the curriculum of schools and colleges of those days. He therefore pleaded that music and art be given a proper place in the educational system of the country. He said:

> I have come prepared with this introduction only in order to lay before our educational authorities the petition that they should try and make it natural for our educated people to reverence Art.
>
> Man has not only discovered scientific truths, he has realized the ineffable. From ancient times the gifts of such expressions have been rich and profuse. Wherever man has seen the manifestation of perfection - in words, music, lives, colours and rhythm, in the sweetness of human relationships, in heroism - there he has attested his joy with the signature of immortal words. I hope and trust that our students may not be deprived of these messages, not for the sake of enjoyment only, but so that our country may be blest by receiving the benefit of an education which will give us the right and power to tell others that being born into this world we have seen the beautiful, we have realized the sublime, we have loved the lovable. May the joys and sorrows, hopes and desires of our country be immortalized in the Elysian fields of song.[48]

Tagore also stressed the importance of dance education in national life and regretted that the traditional folk dances of the rural areas had been gradually dying out. In fact, it was through the poet's initiative that interest in different types of Indian dancing was stimulated in the country. Tagore invited well-known exponents from Manipur, Kerala and other parts of India to teach his boys and girls Indian music and dancing. He started Kala-Bhavan (School of Music and

Art), the famous art school of Visva-Bharati in 1919. It tried to create an aesthetic atmosphere in the institution as an indispensable part of complete education, and it realized one of the major aims of Visva-Bharati and a major aspect of the educational principles of Tagore. In the early days of ashram music was taught and most of the songs were composed by Tagore himself. As regards dancing, there was no special arrangement for its teaching during the ashram school days. But action songs in groups were directed by the poet himself. Systematic arrangement for the teaching was made with the foundation of Visva-Bharati. In 1934 the School of Music and Dancing became a separate department and came to be known as Sangit-Bhavan.

Tagore was essentially a poet and an artist and his conception of beauty was inseparably connected with Truth and Goodness. According to him, aesthetic sensitiveness in the true sense is the fundamental aspect of spiritual education. Aesthetic culture, he pointed out, included the perception and expression of the beautiful in human life and social conduct. His stress on aesthetic education, the cultivation of beauty as an indispensable element in education, was in fact matched by the educational system of ancient Greece. Even John Herbert for whom "Morality" or "Virtue" was the ultimate aim of education subordinated ethical to the aesthetic judgment and subsumed Ethics under Aesthetics.[49]

The value of aesthetic art in life and education has been recognized, at least in educational theory, through the ages from Plato to Dewey. Aesthetic education, however, has not been always given proper place in actual educational practice. In the history of education in England, aesthetic education received due importance only at the early years of

the present century under the influence of Pestalozzi and Forbel. But art education was confined to formalism and symbolism and became an important part of the school curriculum in the form of free creative activity.[50] Tagore revived the old cultural tradition of India and gave it a seat of honor in the life and education of the people. He not only gave fine arts, especially music, the most important place in his philosophy of life and education, but actually started a powerful movement in this direction and gave aesthetic culture a pre-eminent position in the education of young children as also of the common people.

In the Indian educational system as organized by the British rulers, art, music and aesthetic activities in general found little genuine recognition. According to Professor Humayun Kabir:

> "Pre-independent India" did not offer much scope for the development of Art and cultural activities alongside with formal instruction. Those who were attracted by art and moved out of the general education system, while the majority who followed general education paid little attention to art. There is little doubt that much of the malaise of the younger generations is due to this neglect of the emotional and aesthetic side of their life in traditional educational practice.[51]

Tagore, on the other hand, gave art, especially music and dancing, a very important place in the school curriculum at Santiniketan. Professor Kabir observed again:

> For many decades, the art of dance was confined only to some professional dancers whose status in society was low. In the thirties of the present century a renaissance began. He (Tagore) revived many old forms and made dancing once more respectable.[52]

Thus, the art school at Santiniketan became a major force in reviving artistic education in India and provided a successful testing ground for

Tagore's original ideas in this regard. At the same time, through aesthetic education Tagore tried to bring an international understanding. As Tagore has offered the interpretation of art as "Otherness or transcendence and as an added intimacy with the nature of daily reality".[53]

Nationalism and Universalism: The Concept of Internationalism

The outbreak of war in August, 1914 suddenly darkened Tagore's vision of a synthesis between Eastern spirituality and Western practicality. Only a few months before the news that he had received the Nobel Prize encouraged him to believe that the West was ready to absorb the peace-giving influence of Indian thought. The war in Europe convinced him that the West needed some of the Eastern virtues more than ever. The war, with its destruction of lives and of hatred among the nations, made him conscious of the need for interracial understanding. The poet, therefore, wanted to make his little school at Santiniketan - at first an All India Centre of Cultural Life and then an international educational centre - a World University. The poet selected for its motto an ancient Sanskrit verse, Yatra-Visvam Bhavatokenidum, which means "Where the whole world meets in one nest". Tagore maintained two aspects of the program of Visva-Bharti. On the one hand the East had to know its mind, and on the other hand at Visva-Bharati a living relationship had to be established between the East and the West. In 1919 Tagore outlined his plan for a World University and wrote to his son Rathindranath from Japan, whom he had left in charge of the boys studying at his school. In the letter he said:

> The Santiniketan school must be made the thread linking India with the World. We must establish there a centre for humanistic research concerned with all the World's peoples. The age of narrow chauvinism is coming to an end for the sake of future, the first step towards this great meeting of world humanity will be taken on those very fields of Bolpur.[54]

Thus, on December 22, 1918, the seventeenth anniversary of the school's founding, the poet was able to lay the cornerstone for a new building at Santiniketan, the Visva-Bharati. The poet coined this name from two Sanskrit words - visva meaning "all" or "Universal" or "the world" and Bharati, the Hindu goddess of speech and eloquence, more generally symbolizing learning and culture. The word Bharati was also a feminine form of Bharat, the ancient name for India. Besides, Visva-Bharati also conveyed the secondary meaning of "All India" and the tertiary one of "the world and India". Indeed, Visva-Bharati, he said, literally means the message that India has for the world. In 1919, expounding these ideals in south India, Tagore declared that the need of the hour was for a "centre of Indian culture". A true centre of Indian culture would reflect first India's many cultures and then those of the world at large:

> Now has come the age for co-ordination and co-operation . . . So one must prepare the grand field for the co-ordination of the cultures of the world . . . But before we are in a position to stand a comparison with the other cultures of the World, or truly to co-operate with them, we must base our own structure on a synthesis of all the different cultures we have. When, taking our stand at such a centre, we turn towards the West, our gaze shall no longer be timid and dazed; our head shall remain erect, safe from insult. For then we shall be able to take our own views of Truth, from the standpoint of our own vantage ground, thus opening out a new vista of thought before the grateful world.[55]

Tagore was quickly moving from a home-based centre of culture to a lasting international centre. In a key passage of India's relation to

the West in his 1919 essay "A Centre of Indian Culture", he said:

> But before Asis is in a position to co-operate with the culture, she must base her own structure on a synthesis of all the different cultures which she has. When taking her stand on such a culture, she turns towards the West, she will take, with a confident sense of freedom, her own view of truth, from her own vantage-gorund, and open a new vista of thought to the World . . . In this belief, it is my desire to extend by degrees the scope of this Universality on simple lines, until it comprehends the whole range of Eastern Cultures - the Aryan, Semitic, Mongolian and others. Its object will be to reveal the Eastern mind to the World.[56]

Tagore declared that: "Asia is awakening. This great event, if it be but directed along the right lines, is full of hope, not only for Asia herself, but for the whole world."[57] This meeting of the East and West could be possible only in a University. In the opinion of the poet:

> One of such place is the University where we can work together in a common pursuit of truth, share together our common heritage, and realise that artists in all parts of the world have created forms of beauty, scientists discovered secrets of the Universe, philosophers solved the problem of existence, saints made the truth of the spiritual world organic in their own lives, not merely for some particular race to which they belonged, but for all mankind.[58]

This led to the opening of Visva-Bharati. Gathering around him a band of coworkers from India and the West and drawing on funds raised during his tour, Tagore founded Visva-Bharati as an international university with a formal inauguration on December 23, 1921. In Tagore's own words:

> Being strongly impressed with the need and the responsibility, which every individual today must realize according to his power, I have formed the nucleus of an International University in India, as one of the best means of promoting mutual understanding between the East and the West. This institution, according to the plan I have in mind, will invite students from the West to study the different systems of Indian philosophy, literature, art and music in their

> proper environment, encouraging them to carry on research work in collaboration with the scholars already engaged in this task.[59]

From the beginning, co-operation was the keynote of the institution. Co-operation among the various regional and religious cultures of India was the primary purpose of Visva-Bharati. It was based on the great ideal of world peace and human brotherhood. In Tagore's words:

> This institution should be a perpetual creation by the co-operative enthusiasm of teachers and students, growing with the growth of their soul; a world in itself, self-sustaining, independent, rich with ever-renewing life, radiating life across space and time, attracting and maintaining round it a planetary system of dependent bodies. Its aim should lie in imparting life-breath to the complete man, who is intellectual as well as economics, bound by social bonds, but aspiring towards spiritual freedom and final perfection.[60]

The unique distinction of Tagore's internationalism lay in his specific mission of bringing the East and West together, through education and culture. There were, of course, other great thinkers like Tolstoy, Romain Rolland, Bertrand Russell, who dedicated their lives to the cause of human brotherhood. But none of them except Russell was a practical educator in the sense in which Tagore was. Tagore's philosophy of internationalism was, therefore, a contribution valuable not only in the academic sense, but also in the context of international needs and with a view to world peace and fellowship. "The unity of man", Tagore declared, "has to be founded on love and not on hatred and spite."[61] This is possible according to Tagore only in the field of education. For him this was not primarily a political goal but essentially a humanitarian one.

Tagore started at Visva-Bharati a department of higher ideological research. Scholars from different parts of India and abroad visited the

department. Pupils belonging to different linguistic regions of the country joined the various academic departments of the institution. Distinguished scholars from different Asian countries visited the institution from time to time. The language and literature of some Asian countries like China, Japan, Tibet and Persia were taught. Tagore also invited Western scholars to visit his institution and participate in its academic activities. Professor Sylvain, an Oriental scholar from France, arrived on November 10, 1921 as the first visiting professor of Visva-Bharati. Since then, some eminent scholars had come to settle at Santiniketan for some period. Long before Visva-Bharati was founded, Tagore had introduced the custom of celebrating at the institution the birthday anniversaries of the great prophets and saints of other lands. Even when the nonco-operation movement was started in India under the leadership of Gandhi, Tagore advised his coworkers at Santiniketan to keep the institution away from the political movement.

Thus, in the field of internationalism in education Tagore's pre-eminence was even more pronounced. In an age of growing nationalism, he propagated internationalism. As he declared: "Our nationalism lies in this, that we don't worship nationalism as the ultimate and the highest end."[62] Tagore was not only one of the earliest educational philosophers of the modern age to propagate this ideal, but his institution was one of the earliest educational centres to embody it. In India, however, the concept of world citizenship or universal brotherhood is as old as the Vedas. The Brahman, the Upanishads, the Smrities, have all been dominated by this lofty ideal, for philosophy in India is not a mere intellectualism and reasoning divorced from a way of life. Its basic postulates are:

1) The entire Universe is the Abode of the Almighty; 2) I am the Universe, so art Thou; 3) All the world is a family; and 4) Let the whole world be happy. The ideals and the growing consciousness that the whole world is after all a family of men inspired Tagore, the poet, to embark upon an educational undertaking which was the first of its kind. In the words of Jawarharlal Nehru:

> More than any other Indian, he (Tagore) has helped to bring into harmony the ideals of the East and the West, and broadened the basis of Indian nationalism. He has been India's internationalist par excellence . . . .[63]

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CHAPTER IV

IDEAS ABOUT AND WORK ON RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

Tagore was the great humanist of India.

J. Nehru

During his tours in foreign lands, Tagore was constantly thinking about the development of his school. In particular, he was planning to bring his school into close contact with the village communities around it. The widespread poverty of these villages moved Tagore. Therefore, he started directing part of his energy towards improving the lot of the ordinary people in the rural areas. Tagore had spoken of how the idea of rural reconstruction came to him at his father's estate at Shelaidah. He wrote:

> Even in the midst of my Santiniketan work another current of thought was flowing through my mind. It was when I lived at Shelaidah and Potisar that I first saw the life of the villages. I was then engaged in the mamagement of our ancestral property . . . I was able to form a picture of the villages . . . to form a picture of the villagers . . . its outward form, the rivers and wide plains, rice fields and huts in the shelter of the trees. On the other hand its inner story. The suffering of the people became intertwined with all my work . . . Gradually the sorrow and poverty of the villagers became clear to me and I began to grow restless to do something about it.[1]

In 1912 Tagore came to buy from Lord Sinha of Raipur a house at Sural and in 1914 established a model agriculture firm which became the nucleus for his enterprise in rural reconstruction at Sriniketan. The negotiations took place at Ealing in London, with Lord Sinha's brother and Tagore paid 8,000 rupees for a very large property with a house only three miles away from Santiniketan. The house was in need of expensive

repairs and the dense jungle around the site was clearly a breeding place for malarial mosquitoes. Tagore was advised many a time to sell away the property, but, instead, he went into expensive repairs to make it habitable. His plan was to establish a centre for agricultural studies and to try to uplift the villages around it.

Tagore had sent his son, son-in-law and a friend's son to study agriculture in America, the idea being that they could carry out a program of scientific agriculture on their return. This part of his scheme was never realized. In the following eight years, his ideas expanded, and he developed this place into a large, progressive institution under the name of Sriniketan, the Institute of Rural Reconstruction.

Sriniketan: The Institute of Rural Reconstruction

The goals of Sriniketan were outlined in two speeches Tagore delivered on behalf of a society for the advancement of Bengal. This program comprised of the following:

1. Removal of illiteracy and elementary teaching of three R's.
2. Holding small classes and publishing leaflets on hygiene and nursing.
3. Dissemination of knowledge about the prevention of malaria and other diseases.
4. Explaining how to prevent infant mortality and how to supply clean, wholesome drinking water.
5. Establishment of co-operative banks to grant loans at concession rates.

In consultation with Tagore, a band of workers decided to concentrate on the five-point program of medical care, primary education, public

works, including forest conservation, relief from debt and settlement of disputes by arbitration. Tagore himself spent a fortnight at Shileida and saw all the preliminaries. Other centres were established at Patisar, Kamta and Ratoyal, which began to work among the surrounding villages. At each centre a hospital and a dispensary were opened, and doctors were appointed. Over 100 primary schools were started, some of them night schools. Along with these, the people were taught first aid, soil conservation, fire fighting and prevention, how to cope with floods and similar matters that from time to time affected their lives.

During his visit to the United States in 1921, Tagore met a young Englishman named Elmhirst, a graduate at Cambridge University, who took agriculture training in America. Elmhirst was deeply impressed by Tagore's passion for village uplift work and wanted to help him in his rural reconstruction program. In September, 1921 Elmhirst came to Santiniketan and made a thorough study of the conditions and problems of village life in Bengal and at last the Institute of Rural Reconstruction or Sriniketan was founded on February 6, 1922 with Elmhirst as its Co-ordinator. This fulfilled one of Tagore's long-cherished dreams. The new centre was greeted with a song that he composed on that day:

> Back! Get thee back to the starving Land
> That craves thy bounty with outstretched hand!

Mr. Elmhirst left Sriniketan in 1925 to marry a rich widow, Mrs. Dorothy Payne Whitney Straight, who had financed the enterprise at Surul from the outset and continued to do so until 1947. The experiment in Sriniketan was based on the faith that:

> Given the right tools and organization the villagers can help themselves upward by development based on research and by a welfare programme based on every village in India.[2]

The central ideal of the Institute was stated by Tagore as to bring back life in its completeness into the villages, making them self-reliant and self-respectful, acquainted with the cultural tradition. The aims and objectives of the Institute as originally set forth in detail are worth noting in full:

1. To win the friendship and affection of villagers and cultivators by taking a real interest in all that concerns their life and welfare, and by making a lively effort to assist them in solving their most pressing problems.
2. To take the problems of the village and the field to the classroom for study and discussion and to the experimental farm for solution.
3. To carry the knowledge and experience gained in the classroom and the experimental farm to the villagers, in the endeavor to improve their sanitation and health; to develop their resources and credit; to help them to sell their produce and buy their requirements to the best advantage; to teach them better methods of growing crops and vegetables and of keeping livestock; to encourage them to learn and practise arts and crafts; and to bring home to them the benefits of associated life, mutual aid, and common endeavor.
4. To work out practically an all-round system of elementary education in the villages based on the Boy Scout Ideal and training, with the object of developing ideas of citizenship and public duty such as may appeal to the villagers and be within their means and capacity.
5. To encourage in the staff and the students of the Department itself a spirit of sincere service and willing sacrifice in the interests of and on terms of comradeship with their poorer, less educated and greatly

harassed neighbors in the villages.

6. To train the students to a due sense of their own intrinsic worth, physical and moral, and in particular, to teach them to do with their own hands everything which a village householder or cultivator does or should do for a lviing, if possible more efficiently.
7. To put the students in way of acquiring practical experience in cultivation, dairying, animal husbandry, poultry-keeping, carpentry, smithing, weaving, tanning, practical sanitation work, and in the art and spirit of co-operation.
8. To give the students elementary instruction in the sciences connected with their practical work to train them to think and record the knowledge acquired by them for their own benefit and for that of their fellow men.[3]

The Activities of Sriniketan

The activities of Sriniketan were organized under four departments: 1) Agriculture, including Animal Husbandry, 2) Industries, 3) Village Welfare, and 4) Education.

Agriculture Department

At the beginning, this department included in its scope Agriculture, Vegetable gardening, Orchard, Dairy and Poultry. Attempts were made to improve the quality and yield of crops, to introduce new crops and to train villagers in improved methods of farming. Co-operative storehouses were also founded for storing paddy at times of good harvests and for distribution of paddy at times of bad ones. It maintained an agricultural farm for conducting experiments, a dairy and a poultry farm.

Industries Department

The Industries Department in Sriniketan was founded to revive the local industries and introduce new industries suitable to the area. It provided training in different crafts like basketry, paper making, bookbinding, artistic leatherwork, glazed pottery, tailoring, toy making, weaving and mechanical drawing.

Village Welfare Department

The underlying idea of this department was to render all possible services to the villagers through voluntary and co-operative effort, for community welfare. The organization of the Scout movement by Tagore, in co-operation with Elmhirst, first among the boys and later also among the girls, called Brati Balakas and Brati Balikas (devoted boys and girls) was undertaken on the belief that constructive work of a lasting nature could be performed only when the children of the villages were trained for genuine social services. These Brati Balakas were also engaged in many other useful social services, like conducting anti-malarial operations, village sanitation, clearing jungles, opening drains, distributing medicines, nursing the sick, running night schools, collecting data about rural problems and so on. The provision of medical aid at insignificant cost was arranged in 1924 at Sriniketan. Beginning with a clinic at Sriniketan, under the supervision of an American lady, Miss Gretchen Green, who first gave serious attention to the solution of the problem of malaria, the rural health services were later organized into co-operative health societies. Hundreds of families within the jurisdiction of Bolpur Police Station were members of these societies and had been deriving enormous benefits from them.

Education Department

For understandable reasons, Tagore's major emphasis was on the education of the village boys and girls. He had realized that the success of his entire scheme of Rural Reconstruction would ultimately depend upon them. A beginning was made by Tagore with a few orphans from the village and a boarding school was opened at Sriniketan. It was called Siksa-satra which means a place from where free education is imparted. It was started in July, 1924, two years and a half after the establishment of the Institute. A draft syllabus was prepared by Elmhirst in consultation with Tagore. The aim of the Siksa-satra was stated as follows:

> The aim, then, of the Siksa-satra is, through experience in dealing with this overflowing abundance of child-life, its charm and its simplicity, to provide the utmost liberty within surroundings that are filled with creative possibilities, with opportunities for the joy of play that is work - the work of exploration, and of work that is play - the reaping of a succession of novel experiences; to give the child the freedom of growth which the young tree demands for its tender shoot, that field for self-expansion in which all young life finds both training and happiness.[4]

Thus, the aim of Siksa-satra was to ensure freedom of growth through freedom of experience and freedom of expression. The boys had a busy time learning the three R's, doing their chores in the dormitory kitchen, garden, poultry run and dairy. They took part in games, singing and acting, while at the same time mastering carpentry and an additional craft.

This incidentally was the realization of the poet's idea of basic education. The satra could be rightly claimed as a birthplace of basic education. Tagore's object was full, all-round education and not one designed to serve particular ends.

Basic education was for some time the accepted policy of the Government of India for elementary education. Basic education, however, is widely known as a brainchild of Gandhi. Tagore's idea of basic education differed from that of Gandhi in some respects, although the two were similar in many other ways. In this context it would be interesting to compare the two views of basic education and to see how much India's system of basic education owes to Tagore's earlier experiment.

Gandhi and Tagore on Basic Education

The idea of practice of teaching through some form of activity or craft was first developed at Sriniketan long before Gandhi incorporated it in his system of what is known today in India as Basic Education. The basic education as a formal pattern of education was given to the nation by Gandhi. This pattern was evolved, keeping in view the economic and social conditions in the country, and was based on Indian tradition and culture. Gandhi noticed that the education of his time was promoting intellectual training to the neglect of other faculties. He therefore placed a greater emphasis on the three H's (Hand, Head and Heart) than on the three R's. The basic freedom in his view was freedom from fear, and this could not be attained unless men were free from want. Basic education seeks to secure for all individuals this freedom by making them capable of meeting their urgent life needs, at the same time developing in them a vision of new social order, where these needs can be met by truly human means. Gandhi, with his band of workers, introduced this educational system centred on a craft. Gandhi initiated discussion

on an independent scheme of national education and convened an All-India National Education Conference at Wardha in October, 1937. The original plan was based on teaching of spinning and weaving of cotton as forming the core curriculum to which all other subjects like history, geography, arithmetic, etc., were to be related. At one stage it was even thought that the scheme could be made self-supporting with the help of the sale proceeds of the cloth or yarn produced by the teachers and pupils. Later on the scheme was modified, so that this extreme position was given up, and other crafts like gardening, paper and board work, carpentry and leather work, etc., were introduced as substitutes for spinning and weaving. It was thought that basic education would be more suitable for a predominantly agricultural country with a very high proportion of population living in villages. Basic education had received strong Government support and many states, anxious to qualify for central assistance, converted thousands of ordinary schools to basic ones overnight.

The concept of basic education has been interpreted as well as misinterpreted in a variety of ways. In theory it is both attractive and plausible; in actual practice its distinguishing feature is co-ordination of various areas of learning with craft education. But to co-relate successfully all learning with, say, agriculture or spinning requires skillful, well-trained, resourceful, imaginative teachers, and these were in very short supply. Basic schools have also proved to be more expensive than ordinary schools and their success from an educational point of view is in serious doubt.

The craft-centred education related to the actual needs and life of

the pupils and conducted in a social atmosphere and a co-operative spirit with a view to producing true citizens able to support themselves and serve the society as put forth by Wardha Scheme is undoubtedly reflected in Siksa-satra Scheme. While Tagore welcomed Gandhi's earnest interest in mass education in the country, he frankly expressed his doubt and disagreement regarding certain fundamental principles behind the Scheme. He said:

> As the scheme stands on paper it seems to assume that material utility rather than the development of the personality is the real end of education. It is true that as things are even that is much more than what masses are actually getting, but it is nevertheless unfortunate that even in our ideal scheme, education should be doled out in sufficient rations to the poor, while the feast remains reserved for the rich. I cannot congratulate a society or a nation that calmly excluded play from the curriculum of the majority of its children/s education and gives in its place a vested interest to the teachers in the market value of the pupils' labour.[5]

Thus the insistence on earning implicit in the official theory was wholly alien and unacceptable to Tagore. The development of creativeness through craft training in Siksa-satra was seen as an end-in-itself by the poet, not primarily to be used as a means of making a living. In fact, Tagore's scheme was free from criticism levelled against productive and self-supporting principles of Wardha scheme and also free from the high expensiveness of the scheme of basic education as was adopted in various states.

While Tagore's ideas of basic education and rural reconstruction were quite ideal and in that respect different from those of Gandhi, he shared with him a vision of social change which, in fact, did not foresee any change in the social conditions. Tagore, like Gandhi and unlike Nehru, did not favor any heavy industrialization. He was much less

modern in his view of the Indian society in that he could not accept the shape of things to come through science and technology. Although quite progressive, revolutionary and idealistic for his own time, Tagore's plan of Rural Reconstruction perhaps paid little attention to the future.

Tagore's Plan of Rural Reconstruction

Tagore wanted economic freedom for all. Sriniketan stood for freedom from want, freedom from ignorance created through modern knowledge, self-help and co-operative effort. Tagore realized that the only way to get rid of poverty was through co-operation. In order to utilize the spare time of the peasants, he suggested small-scale cottage industries. He was convinced that in the modern scientific era no country could be left untouched by industrialization. He thought he had seen the vulgarity of industrialization in the West. He concluded that the suffering of the West was due to its having surrendered to the machine. He wished India to adopt industrialization in a very cautious way, so that she would not suffer like the West. Therefore, Tagore suggested the adoption of controlled mechanization so that man could have the benefits of industrialization without facing the corresponding evils.

Tagore's poetic mind could not reconcile with the artificial and mechanical atmosphere of urban life. He was against it. His poem, "Red Oleanders", is a protest against the machine age. It records the deep sympathy of the poet for the ordinary workers who have been victimized by the new system of production in an accumulative economy.[6]

But with all his negative attitude towards industrialization, Tagore

maintained a balance. He said quite realistically that mechanization must be accepted with reservation. He wrote:

> I have been complaining against the factory and it may be an instrument of much wrong doing, but it is not a thing that one can reject.[7]

Tagore thought that co-operative methods would be much more effective in solving the problems of poverty. He said:

> If the farmer in a village or still in a community unit, combined and engaged in a joint cultivation of their land on a co-operative basis, they could all profit by the use of these modern machines, which would reduce cost and help produce large yields.[8]

He was very keen to implement co-operative mechanized cultivation on his estate. He said:

> When I explained to the peasants the advantages of joining their lands together and tilling them by machine plough, they readily agreed. But we are ignorant, they said, how can we possibly do such a big thing?[9]

Tagore's attention was not only fixed on agriculture; he thought of the improvement in the economic conditions of farmers through means other than agriculture. His son Rathindranath wrote:

> Father noticed that the actual tillers of the soil were kept busy with agricultural operations for a few months only. They had no occupation for the rest of the year. He wished to introduce handicrafts so that they could earn something extra during their leisure time. He placed the proposal before the Hitaishi Sabha (Meeting). The Sabha at once provided the money to start a weaving school at Potisar. A local weaver was sent to Santiniketan, and after his return the school started functioning.[10]

Further, in one of his letters, Tagore said:

> I have been thinking which of the cottage industries can be taught to the peasants of this place. Nothing grows here except paddy. They have a hard claying soil as raw material. I wish to know if pottery can be introduced as a cottage industry. Try to find out if the people of a village can turn out pottery by investing in a small scale furnace . . . The making of umbrellas is another industry they can be taught.[11]

Although Tagore emphasized co-operative farming and cottage industry, he was not totally opposed to urbanization as such, but he was against the growing tendency of individualism which he thought was a product of urbanization. He said: "Where the town dominates, the individual is all powerful, the community negligible. The civilization burns itself up with its own flames."[12]

Tagore was well aware that India was a country of villages and it had to remain as such. But at the same time he wished that the distinction between city and village be narrowed down. Tagore wanted mechanization to be adopted cautiously both by village and city alike. He held that: "We must march with the times and adopt the newest techniques if we are to keep abreast with the rest of the civilized world."[13] However, to this he added: "We must accept machine without any mental reservation, but we must always use it as slave of man, not his master."[14] Tagore, as has been said earlier, was always cautious in adopting mechanization. He opposed a wholesale adoption of mechanization, because he thought that human values were defeated by it.

In Tagore's plan for Social Reconstruction, Rural Reorganization had been given foremost importance. He was much concerned for rural upliftment but at the same time he warned against the tendency of excessive industrialization. He wished Indian villages to be independent economically and believed that if this could be achieved in a limited sphere through his school, the dream of a similar economic salvation for the entire country could be materialized.

Tagore's plan of Rural Reconstruction and his cautious avoidance of large-scale industrialization and urbanization reveals the conflict

he was in about his vision of a future for the Indian villages. He was a poet, a humanist, and a nationalist by heart, and understandably he found it hard to accept industrial and urbanized future for Indian society. But he could not escape the inevitability of such a development. For him it became perhaps a necessary evil. As a result, Tagore's progressivism became highly limited in its scope; his rural reconstruction was progressive but not futuristic. He could not reconcile his idea of cottage industry with the scientific progress that the world as a whole was making. His numerous writings on rural reconstruction, mostly in simple Bengali publications, failed to appeal to many because they lacked any clear projection for the future in regard to the extent of scientific and industrial development. At times, his writings seemed contradictory because he did not accept nor reject outright the urbanized and industrial society. However, Tagore's ideas showed a new direction for village development. He was successful in generating enough interest, even if only in the villages under the Sriniketan's rural reconstruction plan.

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CHAPTER V

CRITICAL COMMENTS

All is done and finished in the eternal Heaven. But Earth's flowers of illusion are kept externally fresh by death.

Tagore

Any system of education can be judged among other things, by its coherence or consistency between the prescriptions and practice. Tagore's educational ideas undoubtedly excelled in the former. His life had been one dedicated to the pursuit of literature, arts, education and many other things. His early life had been full of restlessness, failure in formal education, frustration with his own childhood conditions and also a rich and fruitful contact with nature, the Western world and, above all, the traditional Indian literature. These are all quite clearly reflected in his poems, essays, stories and novels. Still, he was practical to the utmost. Unlike many other educational thinkers and writers, Tagore was successful in implementing what he believed. His theory of education called for an indigenous system rooted in the country's culture. He advocated Ashram-style education, simple, naturalistic and aesthetic. He wanted to use educational system as a means of social change and, above all, he saw the right kind of education as a mammoth step towards international understanding and unity among diverse cultures. There are at least two relevant questions one can ask about these educational ideas and experiments. One raised earlier as to what extent did he put all these ideas into practice and was he successful in his endeavor? The second question, dealt partly with in earlier chapters, is to what extent

was his philosophy of education a product of the socio-historical context of those days? We will briefly deal with the latter and return to the former.

In his very first educational writing and also in his later writings, Tagore, like many other educational thinkers, declared a war against his contemporary educational system. He criticized the educational system, very much like John Dewey, for being lifeless, mechanical and meaningless and for its failure to generate intrinsic motivation among the pupils and to allow the children freedom to grow. The rebel in him was quite evident in his writings although somewhat amateurish in the beginning. As has been noted earlier, it is quite obvious that at least part of Tagore's discontentment with the contemporary education did arise from his frustration with his own childhood education. He was restless, truant, unhappy and above all unsuccessful in his early education. All these set in the context of Indian nationalism and fight for freedom naturally resulted in a patriotic approach to education. This is reflected in his proposal for an indigenous, national system of Ashram life and the spiritual naturalistic system advocated in religious literature. Another reflection of this early patriotic philosophy may have been Tagore's emphasis on the use of mother-tongue in education. There was thus this early phase in Tagore's development as an educational thinker, during which he was a rebel and a patriot. During this period Tagore seemed to be seeking his own identity within the national scene, trying to establish himself as an educational innovator. With access to fame and finally with the Nobel prize, there was a lasting contact with other Asian countries outside India and more importantly with the West.

Tagore had to transcend the national boundaries in his travels, talks, political, social and educational ideas. His nationalism was thus modified with internationalism, which became an important feature of his later educational philosophy. He had to tell the world what he thought it must hear, viz., international understanding and unity. The result was a multicultural, multinational stream of ideas, a system embodying the best of the East and West. Although the change was inevitable, India's culture and tradition remained germane to Tagore's thinking. He remained a nationalist at heart and thus found it hard to fully reconcile the two aspects of his thought. This obviously became a major source of some inconsistency and conflict in Tagore's approach to education.

Although Tagore's ideas changed with his own maturity as an educational thinker - with the change in his social outlook and with the changing social situation in India and in the world outside - he was determined to experiment with all his ideas. The concrete results of these experiments were the early school, viz., Santiniketan, then Visva-Bharati and Sriniketan. As we have seen, Tagore put all his educational ideas into practice in the educational institutions he founded and developed himself. With the change in his ideas, the nature and policy of these institutions also underwent changes. During his early patriotic phase of educational thinking, Tagore proposed ashramic system of indigenous education and accordingly founded the school at Santiniketan. With the change in his stature as a national and international figure and with his educational thinking changing in its scope, Tagore transformed Santiniketan school into the Visva-Bharati University.

Visva-Bharati soon metamorphised into a multicultural international university consistent with Tagore's new international ideal of understanding and peace through education. Towards the latter part of his life, Tagore preferred to put education above nationalism. International unity and understanding for him was a more dignified goal of education than nationalism. Accordingly, his educational institutions were kept out of the national struggle for freedom. Tagore's ideal of using education as a means of social change was at least in part realized through the village reconstruction program he instituted at Sriniketan. However, all these institutions remained quite narrow in their scope and appeal. One of the reasons for this limited scope of Tagore's educational practices may be that his educational theory was itself in conflict between certain narrowness like the exclusive use of mother-tongue as medium of instruction and certain degree of feeling for national culture on the one hand and a much broader ideal of internationalism on the other. The other and more important reason may be that Tagore's educational institutes could not thrive amid the strong cross-current of fervent struggle for national freedom movement and Gandhi's call for nonco-operation. During a time when a large number of students were leaving schools and colleges to go to the jail, Tagore wanted to keep education and educational institutes out of national politics. It is, therefore, not quite surprising that Tagore's educational practices could not be of any broader scale. However, in spite of their narrow scope, his educational institutes reflected his ideals and they served well and with success the purpose of demonstrating what he preached.

On the whole, Tagore's educational theory and practices were

consistent with each other. But it was not quite so when one considers the educational values that guided his ideas. Tagore's educational ideas were utilitarian and idealistic, progressive and traditional, and national and international, all at the same time. Tagore professed that education had to be a key instrument in social change and progress; he used education to influence and change the economic structure of the society, introducing co-operative agriculture, cottage industries, adult education and similar programs. He was keen on making education relevant and meaningful to the social system in order that it might draw dividends for the society. At the same time, however, he was an idealist, proposing a simple ashram life in residential educational institutions for bringing out the moral and spiritual values in the pupils. He also proposed a naturalistic and aesthetic education to develop among the educated a close communion with nature and a feeling for its beauties. Although Tagore implicitly assumed that it was theoretically possible to have an ideal marriage between the two value systems which he attributed to the East and the West, in practice the gap was more than that could be bridged. For example, Tagore talked about the nationalistic eduation allowing the child to grow naturally in the environment and emphasizing man's eternal bond with nature, but the freedom from social bondage which Rousseau had fruitfully emphasized was lacking from the proposed system. On the one hand, Tagore wanted education to be a part of the society and for the society. But the idealist in him prevented him from accepting the important utilitarian aspects of science, education and industrialization. Tagore seems to have been aware of the lack of modernity in certain respects and thus he defended himself:

"One must bear in mind that those who have the true modern spirit need not modernize, just as those who are truly brave are not braggarts". He noted in his Nationalism lectures: "True modernism is freedom of mind, not slavery of taste. It is independence of thought and action, not tutelage under European schoolmasters. It is science, but not its wrong application in life."[1] He advocated search for truth through naturalistic spiritual education but failed to emphasize the need for scientific research far enough. His idealism made him a conservative, traditional and artistic educator, but he lacked the scientific, progressive and modern attitude towards education that one would expect from a 20th Century educator and social reformer. Tagore's originality was in trying to put, in his words, the Western materialism and Eastern spiritualism together, but his synthesis was not quite convincing. He denounced industrialization; his system did not leave much for large-scale scientific research, and he was against mechanization. Tagore wanted to go back to the ancient Topovan system of education in forest colonies and at the same time he wanted education to be a part of the changing society and socially meaningful. Similar value conflict was also evident in Tagore's nationalism and internationalism - in his call for indigenous system of education imparted through mother-tongue and at the same time in his plea for international understanding and blending the East and the West through education. However, Tagore saw the need to put all these conflicting values together in a balanced synthesis in the perspective of nationalism in India's fight for freedom from British rule and internationalism in the context of a war-torn world. He realized the necessity for an international understanding through

a new but not alien system of education. Kipling thought that the East and the West shall never meet. Tagore not only believed to the contrary; he tried to realize it in his own idealist practice.

Finally, an educational philosopher has also to be judged by his contribution towards understanding and solving the current educational problems of his own time and of the country. Tagore was indeed great in this regard. He had provided some very definite answers, and his greatness lives in the directions he had shown and initiated for the future of Indian education, if not the final solutions. The entire case has been observed by Professor Humayun Kabir:

> It is enough to mention here that practically every new development in Indian education since the beginning of the century owes something to the work which was initiated at Santiniketan.[2]

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